

Coins

Bell, map, and Lincoln: A piggy bank's puzzler

By Roger Boye

MORE QUESTIONS from Tribune readers are answered in this week's column.

Q—While perusing my piggy-bank collection of coins, I discovered an unusual 1976 Lincoln cent. The Liberty Bell and an outline map of the United States are depicted on the heads side, next to Lincoln. Is this a rare coin?—R.J., Whiting, Ind.

A—No. Occasionally, enterprising businessmen etch designs on coins to create novelty items. Most collectors have little interest in such contrivances.

Q—I've heard of a George Criswell who is an expert on Confederate money. Do you have the address for such a man? I need a lot of information.—G.P., North Riverside

A—You are thinking of Grover Criswell, the current president of the American Numismatic Association and a longtime dealer in collectible currency. His book on Confederate and Southern states currency, which he sells for \$15, is a basic hobby reference. Write him at Route 2, Box 1085, Fort McCoy, Fla. 32637.

Q—At what address can I order 1979 proof sets from the government? Is it the same as in past years? Also, will the 1979 sets contain the new Susan B. Anthony dollar?—G.D., Chicago

A—If you bought coin sets from the United States

Mint last year, you should receive a computerized order card for 1979 proof sets in early April. If your name is not on the mint's mailing list, request an order card by writing Bureau of the Mint, 55 Mint St., San Francisco, Cal. 94175. The Anthony dollar will be included in this year's set.

Q—I recently received a silver certificate \$1 bill in change. Is it worth only face value, or do you think I might be rich?—S.F., Chicago

A—Without knowledge of the series year and condition of the bill, I cannot estimate the collectors' value. However, most silver certificates found in circulation are relatively common among hobbyists.

Q—I've noticed that the mint marks on some of my Lincoln cents, and on some of my other coins, are a little off-center. Is that unusual?—R.D., Oak Park

A—Slight variations in the location of mint marks are common because the marks are engraved by hand into dies (metal objects used to make coins). However, if the mint mark touches another part of the design (such as a digit in the date), is rotated more than 45 degrees, or appears to be "doubled," the coin may be a collectors' item.

If you have questions about coins or currency, send them to Roger Boye, Arts & Fun, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Do not send coins, and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.